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**VIETNAM: THE END OF A CHAPTER**  
**A PLAN FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS**

**A JOINT PAPER  
BY**

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## INTRODUCTION

More than seventeen years have passed since the signing of the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement formally ending the Vietnam War. Yet many Americans cannot get the war out of their system. The national trauma associated with the U.S.'s failure in that conflict has scarred our psyche, precluding many Americans from dealing with Vietnam in any kind of logical manner. Unlike our vanquished foes from World War II, many Americans, including many government officials, seemingly seek to punish Vietnam and extract in peace what we were unable to gain on the battlefield.

Today, Vietnam is not the same country Americans knew when they first arrived in large numbers in the 1960's. Although Hanoi achieved forcible reunification with the South, they have been unable to satisfactorily address the problems associated with governing a country. Thus far, they have been unsuccessful in translating their battlefield successes into politically and economically viable programs that meet the needs of the Vietnamese people.

For more than a decade, the United States has followed a policy of keeping Vietnam politically and economically isolated from the world community. Economically, the degree of suffering inflicted on the Vietnamese by the United States embargo has been successful beyond anyone's imagination. According to the CIA World Factbook for 1989, Haiti, where 85% of the population lives in absolute poverty, has a per capita income twice as high as that of Vietnam (\$360 versus \$198). With a budget deficit of \$1.1 Billion, an external debt of \$8.6 Billion (owed mostly to the Soviets), an inflation rate of 301%, and an unemployment rate of at least 10% and climbing, the problems are not hard to understand.<sup>1</sup> Couple the basic economic problems with the world's fifth largest standing Army, which utilizes 40-50% of the central government's yearly budget, and the size of the problem begins to come into focus.

Besides economic deprivation of 65 million Vietnamese (plus Laotians and Cambodians), another unwanted affect of the economic sanctions has been to force Vietnam further into the arms of the Soviet Union, creating even more of a client-state relationship than the one that existed during the war years.

Admittedly, some of Vietnam's economic failures have been due to mismanagement of the economy through central planning and outdated Communist economic policies plus the overwhelming problems of two distinctively different halves of a country being unified after 35 years of war. Lack of access to world markets is, however, the primary reason for the economic morass in which the country finds itself today.

For our Asian friends, whose good will we actively continue to seek, the continuing economic embargo by the U.S. has created a second massive outpouring of refugees, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. As opposed to the politically repressed "first wave" of refugees who left Vietnam from 1975-1977, the "second wave" economic migrants have been escaping Vietnam's never ending economic crisis and what they see as a desolate future. The economic migrants have worn out their welcome and are overtaxing their host countries' abilities to cope. Additionally, the continued movement of Vietnamese on such a largescale serves as a constant reminder to other Asian nations of the region's general overall instability.

One can argue that in fact the U.S. policy has served our interests well. But the world is a vibrant, dynamic and changing environment, as recent events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have demonstrated, and government policies require constant reappraisal to ensure they continue to promote national interests. The current situation in Southeast Asia, and in Vietnam in particular, provides the United States an opportunity for exerting influence and promoting favorable change. However, this opportunity can be fleeting and lost if we fail to reexamine U.S. policy goals within the context of the changing global situation.

This paper will examine the current relationship between the United States and Vietnam, focusing on the two issues that most influence the bilateral relationship-- POW/MIA and Cambodia. We will then make the case that it is in the U.S. interest to improve relations and begin the normalization process. The paper concludes with a road map outlining specific actions both sides should take to accelerate an improvement in relations.

The fundamental arguments offered in this paper address the two formal preconditions the United States has established before talks on normalization could commence. First, Vietnam was required to withdraw their troops from Cambodia (which they did last September, although there is not universal agreement on that) and they must contribute to a satisfactory political solution to the Cambodian conflict. Second, although both countries state publicly that POW/MIA is a humanitarian issue separate from the political issues that divide us, we have made it clear that the pace and scope of normalization will be affected by Vietnam's efforts to cooperate and resolve the POW/MIA issue. Since our central thesis is that the current geopolitical changes underway in Southeast Asia require a reexamination of U.S. policy with Vietnam, the discussion will focus on relatively recent events in the bilateral relationship (since the first mission to Hanoi of Special Presidential Emissary General John W. Vessey, Jr., in August 1987) rather than recount the well-known historical background associated with the POW/MIA and Cambodian problems. Any discussion of the bilateral relationship must begin with a review of that most contentious issue, the POW/MIA problem.

## REVIEWING THE ISSUES

### POW/MIA

After several years of benign neglect during the Carter years, the Reagan Administration "resurrected" the POW/MIA issue early in President Reagan's first term. As a result of his keen personal interest, President Reagan declared the POW/MIA issue a matter of the highest national priority. In addition to promoting an active public awareness campaign, the government began to devote increased manpower and resources to the issue. For example, since 1981, manpower resources have doubled or tripled in key government agencies working the POW/MIA issue (i.e., the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) increased its authorized strength from 12 to 38).<sup>2</sup> In terms of policy on the issue, the government has established three basic policy objectives--the return of any live POWs being held against their will; the return of any recoverable remains; and the fullest possible accounting for those missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.<sup>3</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to resolve the POW/MIA issue, it is impossible to discuss the U.S.-Vietnamese relationship without addressing the pervasive impact the issue has on that relationship.

There are currently 2,304 Americans listed as missing or unaccounted for from the Vietnam War (some 1,679 of those are from Vietnam).<sup>4</sup> By way of comparison, there are 8,200 from the Korean War and 78,750 from World War II still listed in those categories.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the military services, through the service secretary, have in fact issued presumptive findings of death (basically a legal determination) for all but one of the missing individuals from Vietnam. Air Force Colonel Charles Shelton is carried in POW status for symbolic reasons, resulting from a personal commitment made by then Secretary of the Air Force Vern Orr. At the time of Operation Homecoming in 1973 (when the POWs were returned), there were 2,528 Americans for whom we received no accounting. However, it is often overlooked that approximately half of those individuals (1,178) were actually categorized as KIA/BNR (Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered).<sup>6</sup>

In other words, there was ample evidence/information those individuals were killed, but in many instances the battlefield situation precluded the recovery of the body at the time of the incident. When the POW/MIA issue was "reenergized" in the early years of the Reagan Administration, the numbers were basically combined (the KIA/BNR with the 1,350 listed as POW/MIA) to reflect all personnel who fit in the category of missing or unaccounted for (in the sense that neither they nor their remains had returned from the war.) These numbers are important in terms of providing some perspective on how the issue does, or perhaps more importantly should, impact on the policy aspects of U.S.-Vietnamese relations.

Since General Vessey's August 1987 mission to Hanoi, the Vietnamese have increased cooperation on all the humanitarian issues he raised with his Vietnamese counterpart, Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach (POW/MIA, Amerasian Children, Orderly Departure Program, reeducation camp detainees). In fact, since that first meeting Vietnam has cooperated well on virtually all issues the U.S. side has raised. For example, after much prodding from the U.S. side, the Vietnamese have conducted unilateral investigations into cases of missing Americans and provided the results of their efforts to the U.S. side; they have permitted joint investigative teams access to witnesses and incident locations to help facilitate case resolution; they have returned remains of unaccounted for Americans at an unprecedented rate. Perhaps most importantly, their cooperation since the first Vessey mission has helped shed light on the most compelling aspect of the POW/MIA issue—the live prisoner question.

For many Americans, the live prisoner issue is an emotional question that transcends any logical discussion of the argument. It has become a litmus test of one's patriotism in which an individual is branded either a believer in the live prisoner issue or a knowing participant in what is alleged to be a government conspiracy to cover up the truth. For those people, often referred to as RAMBO's, there is no middle ground. However, when the emotional part of the argument is stripped away (American POWs in

bamboo cages many years after the war), an unbiased observer could easily conclude that significant insight has been gained into the live prisoner issues over the past several years. The increased intelligence effort and the excellent results achieved since the first Vessey mission have made that possible. The question for our bilateral relationship is should the POW/MIA issue, and specifically the live prisoner issue, stand in the way of an improved relationship if Vietnam meets the requirements we have established for normalization? Similarly, we must ask ourselves if the POW/MIA issue would be better served by an improved official relationship between our two countries? What in fact are we putting at risk in terms of Vietnamese cooperation on the issue by moving toward an improved relationship before the POW/MIA issue is completely resolved?

How would an improved bilateral relationship affect the U.S. Government's three POW/MIA policy objectives? To realistically have any chance for an improved bilateral relationship, it will be necessary first to satisfactorily resolve the live prisoner question. Clearly, we need to satisfy ourselves regarding that aspect of the issue before any meaningful improvement in relations can take place. If the American people believe that POWs are being held against their will, both they and the Congress will prevent any movement toward an improved relationship. Therefore, the essential question is just what do we know? There are two key factors to consider in this regard.

First, the intelligence community has gained significant insight into the live prisoner issue since the renewed effort started early in the Reagan Administration. They have acquired vast amounts of evidence/information from various sources that would permit most reasonable people to conclude that the Administration has the necessary information to come to a decision regarding this most compelling aspect of the issue. Certainly we will continue to receive information from refugees and other sources for many years. However, the facts are that we have received, processed, analyzed, evaluated and basically concluded from the reports received since the end of the war that we have no specific evidence that any Americans are being held against their will in



Vietnam. While there are reports that remain open, they are basically cases in which the information is so tenuous or sparse that it precludes any type of reasonable follow-up action and likely will remain unresolved. The time has come to make the tough political decisions this issue deserves. Failing to exercise the type of political leadership the situation demands, will keep the bilateral relationship captive to the POW/MIA issue. That does not mean the POW/MIA issue is resolved. It does mean it should not remain an obstacle to improved relations if the Administration is satisfied the Vietnamese have met their other criteria for beginning the normalization process.

Second, in addition to persuading Vietnam to resume cooperation on humanitarian issues he raised, General Vessey has attempted to shed some light on the live prisoner issue. Those who follow the issue closely will recall that over 200 case files on missing and unaccounted for Americans were passed to the Vietnamese in conjunction with his first visit to Hanoi. Some 70 of those cases were identified as "compelling" discrepancy cases. That is, they were cases for which we believed there is strong evidence that the individual survived his incident, was captured and came under Vietnamese control or about whom the Vietnamese should have information. There are several points that need to be understood about the 70 cases.

First, both sides understood that they were a starting point which permitted the achievement of some measurable progress on the issue. Second, they represented the type of cases we believed the Vietnamese could help resolve if they made a good faith effort. Finally, since those cases generally were the most compelling discrepancy cases, we expected they would provide some insight into the live prisoner issue. After all, these individuals were the ones we believed either had or might have survived their incident. On balance, both Vietnam's unilateral efforts and the joint U.S.-Vietnamese search and recovery team investigations that commenced in September 1988 have provided important information on a number of cases. There is every reason to believe the Vietnamese will continue their cooperation. In fact, during General Vessey's second

trip to Hanoi last October, Foreign Minister Thach agreed to reinvestigate 57 cases from the original 70 case list, as well as investigate 49 cases from the Lao-Vietnam border area and 37 new discrepancy cases. To date, over 1,500 man-days have been spent in Vietnam by American technical experts since the joint investigative activity began. The ninth joint field investigation was completed last month. Technical talks (13 total) have been conducted on a regular basis since the first Vessey mission. Of the 230 remains that the Vietnamese have returned since the first Vessey mission, 98 have thus far been identified as those of missing Americans.<sup>7</sup> Although this increased access to information may not be quite at the level we want, it has given us critical insight into the live prisoner issue and established a level of cooperation by the Vietnamese that would only be enhanced by an improved bilateral relationship.

#### **POW/MIA COOPERATION AND U.S. INTERESTS**

What does the U.S. put at risk in terms of POW/MIA cooperation by moving in the direction of normalization? If we can reconcile the live prisoner issue to our satisfaction, then what is actually being put in jeopardy is cooperation on the other two aspects of the issue--the return of remains and progress toward the fullest possible accounting. In either case, the potential gain by a permanent presence in Vietnam (at whatever level is deemed appropriate) that allows increased access to the people as well as other potential sources of information, would help shed light on the remaining POW/MIA cases. In fact, Vietnam's Ambassador to the United Nations, Trinh Xuan Lang, was emphatic about this point in an interview with him on March 26, 1990.<sup>8</sup>

One could argue as well that the Vietnamese would clearly be interested in expanding the bilateral relationship beyond the initial stages as rapidly as possible. They want integration into and access to world financial markets/institutions, Western aid and assistance and a more favorable environment for foreign capital investment. They may no longer find it necessary to play their POW/MIA card so close to the vest. The

incentive for increased cooperation would be obvious to them. Clearly the United States holds the upper hand in terms of how quickly the relationship expands. Continued intransigence on the part of the Vietnamese would only hurt them. What is at risk for the U.S.? Basically that cooperation might be slowed down or halted and information and remains provided at a decreased rate. If so, that seems a small risk to take relative to the potential increase in cooperation that might be achieved with an improved relationship. Progress on those two policy goals would be enhanced as a natural by-product of normalization.

#### **OTHER HUMANITARIAN ISSUES**

While POW/MIA cooperation has been the high visibility item of bilateral discussions between the United States and Vietnam, there are other important humanitarian issues of interest to the U.S. as well. Again, using the first Vessey mission to Hanoi as a yardstick, Vietnamese cooperation since the August 1987 mission has generally been good and several long-standing points of contention have been resolved. These other humanitarian issues include the Orderly Departure Program (ODP), which controls the flow of legal Vietnamese immigrants to the United States and other countries under the auspices of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Amerasian Children who wish to emigrate to the United States; the family reunification program facilitating the emigration from Vietnam of relatives of Vietnamese-Americans or permanent Vietnamese residents of the United States; and the resettlement of former reeducation camp detainees to the United States.

Cooperation on these issues has increased to the point that last year record numbers of people left Vietnam under the ODP and Amerasian resettlement programs. Additionally, large numbers of reeducation camp detainees have been released from reeducation camps. Hopefully, many of those individuals who were closely associated with the United States during the war will be allowed to immigrate to the United States

if they desire to do so. While cooperation at time has been intermittent on the resettlement program for the former reeducation camp detainees, the first applications were processed by U.S. officials last October and the program appears to be running smoothly.

The Vietnamese have increased cooperation on another humanitarian issue as well; namely, helping to stop the flow of economic refugees leaving their country. This issue is of great concern to their neighbors in Southeast Asia. Last June in Geneva, the Vietnamese agreed to a comprehensive plan of action calling for the voluntary return of refugees who had fled for economic reasons and not to punish any returnee who had left clandestinely. They also agreed to funnel UNHCR assistance to the returnees.<sup>9</sup>

Although these issues play only on the margins of the U.S.-Vietnamese relationship, and have a limited constituency within the United States, their resolution would likely be enhanced by an improved bilateral relationship. An in-country presence would undoubtedly facilitate dealing with the bureaucratic challenges offered by the rudimentary administrative infrastructure that exists in Vietnam.

## **CURRENT U.S. POLICY**

Since the Vietnamese invasion of 1978, U.S. policy regarding the normalization of relations with Vietnam has basically centered around the Cambodian situation. In fact, one could argue that the U.S. position has remained fairly consistent in that normalization of relations with Vietnam would not be possible outside the context of an acceptable political settlement in Cambodia. An acceptable political settlement from the U.S. perspective has basically been defined in terms of an end to Vietnam's military role, the unacceptability of the Khmer Rouge, and self-determination for the Cambodian people. However, outside the Administration, there are those who question if in fact the U.S. has not changed its "criteria" over the years, particularly after it appeared that the Vietnamese were indeed going to withdraw their troops from Cambodia. For instance, in

an interview with Nayan Chanda, a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and someone who follows U.S.-Vietnamese relations closely, he stated that it was clear to him that the U.S. Government has put a different twist on what many regard as the original requirement for normalization talks--withdrawal from Cambodia, and added the additional requirement that Vietnam contribute to an acceptable political solution as well. In Chanda's view, there has been a definite change in the criteria by the United States. He also noted that Vietnamese officials have indicated that they view the U.S. position as having changed.<sup>10</sup> That point was verified in our discussions with Ambassador Lang on March 26th, when he stated that after Vietnam announced their troop withdrawal from Cambodia in April 1988, the United States added the additional requirement that Vietnam must contribute to a satisfactory political solution to the Cambodian problem as well.<sup>11</sup> What does the record reflect?

An examination of statements made by Administration officials since the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia provides some useful insight. Overall, the language used has evolved over time, becoming more specific as the possibility of a settlement became a real possibility. Not surprisingly, the early statements reflect a certain skepticism about Vietnam's intentions shortly after the invasion and the skepticism continued as the Vietnamese announced their planned troop withdrawals. While the Administration might argue that a Vietnamese troop withdrawal from Cambodia by itself has never been stated to be sufficient for normalization talks to proceed, it is clear that many people, including the Vietnamese, clearly thought that was the case. A brief summary of official statements will illustrate some of the "nuances" of the U.S. position. These statements are derived from a background paper drafted by the Department of State outlining the U.S. position on normalization from 1977 through March 1989.

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, Richard Holbrooke, testified in June 1979 that "...we had repeatedly stressed to the Vietnamese that their policies and actions toward their neighbors would affect the pace and timing of our ability to normalize

relations." In regard to what we hoped for in Cambodia, Holbrooke called for "an independent and stable Kampuchea...we believe the people of Kampuchea deserve at long last a government which is representative of their aspirations and which respects their human rights. In our view, neither the...Heng Semrin regime nor the Pol Pot government satisfy these criteria."

In a March 1980 question and answer session, then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance clearly indicated that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was an "obstacle" to normalization and stated, "I think it is unlikely we will be establishing relations with Vietnam in the near future." Later that same month Assistant Secretary Holbrooke was quite clear in his testimony addressing the reasons for failing to achieve diplomatic relations with Vietnam as well as defining the Carter Administration's views on efforts of the U.S. and its allies and friends "to promote a political settlement....We have explored with all how we might proceed toward a political settlement which at a minimum would promote the goal of a withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, the emergence of a genuinely neutral Cambodia at peace with its neighbors and with a government which represents its people and respects their rights, and the return to regional stability and balance by the elimination of the Soviet military intrusion into the region."

The Reagan Administration also went on record as opposing normalization of relations while Vietnamese troops were in Cambodia. Secretary of State Alexander Haig told the ASEAN countries that "The United States will not normalize relations with a Vietnam that occupies Kampuchea and remains a source of trouble to the entire region." In July 1981 testimony, then Assistant Secretary of State John Holdridge outlined the U.S. view on an acceptable Cambodian settlement, including the issue of troop withdrawal. Holdridge testified that "We will continue a process of diplomatic isolation and economic deprivation until Hanoi is prepared to follow the will of the world community as expressed in two consecutive U.N. General Assembly resolutions and

agrees to troop withdrawal, free elections, and an end to outside interference in Kampuchea...When Hanoi is prepared to withdraw from Kampuchea and when it is no longer a source of trouble to the entire region, the economic and political pressures which now weigh heavily upon that country can be lifted."

In July 1984, Secretary of State George Shultz identified the "need for a negotiated political solution, one based on the restoration of Kampuchea's sovereignty and the rights of its people to choose their own government." The Secretary went on to add that "Compared with the relationship Hanoi could have with the rest of the world—with access to markets, new technologies, and foreign assistance, as well as greatly increased diplomatic options—Vietnam's present isolation, resulting from its occupation of Kampuchea, imposes a cruel burden on its own people. No Vietnamese proposal to date has addressed the underlying issues—withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and creation of a government in Phnom Penh chosen by the Khmer people themselves..."

It is worth noting that at a press conference in Singapore in July 1984, Secretary Shultz linked normalization of relations to the POW/MIA issue. The Secretary stated that "Insofar as long-term relations with Vietnam are concerned, it (the POW/MIA issue) represents a major stumbling block that must be gotten out of the way. Even if there was a Kampuchean settlement of some kind that was satisfactory, we would still find this matter of great concern and would want to see it dealt with properly." In September 1984, then Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Paul Wolfowitz reiterated the Administration policy on Cambodia and repeated the linkage of normalization and the POW/MIA issue. Secretary Wolfowitz stated that "We cannot consider an improvement in U.S.-Vietnamese relations as long as Hanoi continues to occupy Cambodia. Normalization of relations between Vietnam and the United States will require a settlement in Cambodia, as well as substantial progress and cooperation on accounting for Americans missing from the war in Indochina."

In June 1985, President Reagan also linked normalization of relations and the POW/MIA issue. The President stated, "The Vietnamese Government says...they want to normalize relations with the United States. But we have made it clear there is only one way this can take place. The American people demand the fullest possible accounting for our POW's and MIA's. That and a peaceful resolution of their brutal occupation of Cambodia would help bring Vietnam out of international isolation."

Interestingly enough, one month later in July 1985, Secretary Shultz told the ASEAN countries that "The normalization of U.S.-Vietnamese relations is dependent upon a negotiated settlement of the Cambodian problem. We and Vietnam agree that the issue of our missing men is a humanitarian one whose resolution should not be obstructed by other differences between us." It is easy to see why there might be some confusion over exactly what the U.S. Government policy is regarding the criteria for normalization and whether in fact the POW/MIA issue is a separate humanitarian one. Referring again to our recent conversation with Ambassador Lang, he underscored the point that Vietnam has repeatedly agreed to joint public statements with the United States about the separate humanitarian nature of the POW/MIA issue, only to have U.S. officials repeatedly link it to other political issues.<sup>12</sup>

During Congressional testimony in September 1987, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David Lambertson offered some new language regarding the U.S. policy concerning Vietnam and the Cambodian question. He stated that the "U.S. policy towards Vietnam has been consistent and, we believe, effective. We are prepared to move toward normalization of relations with Vietnam only in the context of a settlement which involves the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia." Mr. Lambertson offered the following definition of a settlement: "one which will permit the people of that country (Cambodia) to choose their own government through free elections and without outside coercion. I should add that the United States remains unalterably opposed to a return to power by the Khmer Rouge."



In July 1988, Secretary of State Shultz again linked normalization and POW/MIA. In a speech in Honolulu he stated "The United States, together with our allies and friends in Asia, looks forward to Vietnam's rejoining the community of nations. The United States will unequivocally welcome normalized relations with Vietnam in the context of an acceptable Cambodian settlement and a resolution of the POW/MIA issue which, if left unsettled, will continue to divide our peoples."

Shortly after the Shultz speech in Hawaii, Mr. Lambertson described U.S. policy toward Vietnam this way during Congressional testimony: "We must continue to adhere to a policy which can be summarized as 'no trade, no aid, and no normal relations' with Vietnam except in the context of a political settlement and an end to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia."

In March 1989 testimony, Mr. Lambertson stated that "In the context of an acceptable settlement in Cambodia which includes the complete withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops, we are prepared to normalize our relations with Vietnam." Mr. Lambertson went on to clarify the terms of a Cambodian settlement as follows: "The U.S. position on the necessary elements of an acceptable settlement is clear: the verified and complete withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces, effective safeguards against a Khmer Rouge return to power, and the restoration of genuine self-determination to the Cambodian people..."

Although it may have been the intent of U.S. policymakers from the beginning of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia to not only call for the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops but also have Vietnam play a constructive role in finding an acceptable political solution to the conflict, it is understandable how those outside the Administration, and especially the Vietnamese, believe that the U.S. has gradually changed its position on exactly what it was requiring from Vietnam.

Although both the United States and Vietnam offer public pronouncements that the POW/MIA issue is a humanitarian issue separate from other political problems that

divide the two countries, that may be a separation that exists only in the minds of the most dedicated followers of the issue.<sup>13</sup> Early in the current Administration Secretary of State James Baker linked POW/MIA cooperation to normalization of relations during an appearance on Capitol Hill. That, of course, is consistent with what many people, both inside and outside the Administration, believe to be the case anyway. In truth, the Vietnamese are going to cooperate when they believe it in their interest to do so. Their track record is such that if the other "political differences" that divide us are on the front burner, it is doubtful that there will be much cooperation on the humanitarian issues in which we are interested. The humanitarian and separation argument for POW/MIA would seem to be a moot exercise that flies in the face of "real politik". Nevertheless, it may provide useful political rhetoric that at least gives the appearance that both sides are taking the high moral ground.

As the review of official policy pronouncements has shown, over the years the United States has made it very clear to the Vietnamese that the pace and scope of normalization will be effected by their efforts on the POW/MIA issue. They were encouraged to "pre-position" themselves by getting that important national issue out of the way so when Cambodia was resolved there would not be other obstacles to normalization. It is not clear to us that the Vietnamese ever grasped the importance of that message. Their cooperation on POW/MIA has certainly ebbed and flowed over the past decade with a decided improvement since the first Vessey mission. However, with at least the first part of the Cambodia problem behind them and movement afoot on seeking an acceptable political solution (although no one is too sanguine about that happening any time soon), the POW/MIA issue still has some loose ends. Until Vietnam convinces the U.S. that they are cooperating within the limits of their capabilities, mistrust and suspicion will remain regarding both their actions and motives. Such suspicion will not create an atmosphere conducive to accelerating the scope and pace of normalization. Hanoi has an avenue for accelerated progress available to them in the

joint search and recovery investigative teams. The U.S. teams have frequent dialogue and contact with their Vietnamese counterparts. They understand and are capable of assessing the information we need and must receive from the other side, and more importantly, of ascertaining if a good faith effort is being made to address our concerns. They get a good "feel" for the level of effort being made. Until they give the Vietnamese an overall favorable report, and in turn the policymakers are convinced the Vietnamese have "come clean," resistance to moving ahead with the relationship will remain.

#### **GROUPS INFLUENCING THE ISSUE**

No discussion of normalization of relations can take place without considering the influence of some of the major nongovernmental groups that are interested in the question. Although there are many groups, individuals and agencies with a keen interest in the issue, two key groups must be convinced that beginning the normalization process is a sound policy decision. First and foremost is the National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. This private group is comprised mostly of family members of those listed as missing and unaccounted for in the Vietnam War (returned POWs are also eligible for membership). Current membership is approximately 3,600. There is also a large contingent of concerned citizens whom support the League's efforts to promote awareness on the POW/MIA issue.

The League has many unique characteristics making it a viable, effective, and most of all a credible organization. Although a private, nongovernment group, the League has close ties with the U.S. government, especially since the renewed government effort in the early Reagan years. The League has often been unfairly accused by their detractors of selling out to the government and failing to keep up the pressure on the Washington bureaucrats. From personal experience, we can attest that is not the case at all. The League's Executive Director is a member of the POW/MIA Interagency Group (IAG)

responsible for developing government policy on the issue. As an IAG member, the League can be assured that its concerns are addressed by the appropriate government decisionmakers. In turn, the government benefits by knowing that the policies developed are sensitive and responsive to the concerns of the people most effected by their directives and actions. The League is well respected by members of Congress and often provides input to legislation or testimony before various House and Senate forums. Needless to say, the League can be an ally or worth adversary on the normalization question.

Over the years the League has worked hard to keep the POW/MIA issue separate from the political issues that divide the United States and Vietnam, not wishing to have the Cambodian situation for instance, adversely affect hoped for progress on POW/MIA. Thus, it will be necessary for the Administration to solicit the League's support early on if efforts to get the normalization process underway are to have any chance of success. The government needs to convince the League that improved and expanded relations can increase the chances of realizing their goals on the POW/MIA issue. Without the League's support, the road will be that much tougher, if not in fact impossible.

The second key group is the various veterans organizations, especially the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion. Although there are other groups that follow and speak out on the issue, these three groups have the national reputation and following that will require convincing by the Administration of the wisdom of moving towards normalization.

VVA President Mary Stout stated to us in a recent interview that the membership of her organization supports an improved relationship between the United States and Vietnam. In fact, some of the general membership, as well as several members of the national board, have traveled to Vietnam and met with Vietnamese officials. They were struck by the poor economic conditions and the desperate need for humanitarian assistance. While there certainly is a portion of the VVA membership that still harbors

ill will toward the Vietnamese, the organization as a whole, and certainly the national leadership, seems focused on the future bilateral relationship and not obsessed with exacting retribution or revenge. It is likely the Administration could count on the support of the VVA leadership for any policy effort that projects a forward-looking strategy for our future relationship with Vietnam.<sup>14</sup>

The VFW and American Legion seem more cautious in their assessment of a renewed relationship with Vietnam. Like the VVA and virtually all other responsible groups interested in the issue, they have steadfastly supported the Administration position demanding the fullest possible accounting from the Indochinese governments. An example of this more cautious approach was evidenced when the VFW raised objection to the providing of excess Veterans Administration hospital equipment to Vietnam in support of the "Vessey initiative" (the Vessey initiative refers to efforts to address Vietnam's humanitarian concerns as agreed to between General Vessey and Foreign Minister Thach during the first Vessey mission to Hanoi). The equipment was not being provided at the expense of American veterans. This equipment was declared surplus and replaced because other newer, high-tech equipment was available.

The public outcry voiced by the VFW is indicative of the sensitivities and emotions involved when dealing with the veterans community. Again, the Administration will need to work with groups like the VFW and American Legion and gain their support for efforts to improve the bilateral relationship. The national boards of both organizations are well-versed on the issue and must be made important allies for any effort to move the normalization process forward to succeed. Like the National League of Families, the VFW and American Legion are well connected in both Houses of Congress and are adroit at making their positions known to the appropriate members.

## CONGRESS

The Congress will continue to play an important role in shaping the U.S. relationship with Vietnam. Just as they influenced the conduct of the war, they will be major players in determining the type of relationship that evolves and the pace at which the process moves forward. After all, it was Congress that precluded the payment of reparations money after the war and took action to isolate Vietnam economically with aid and trade embargoes.

Historically, Congressional interest has ebbed and flowed based on the personal interest of the Members. Most have focused on the POW/MIA issue rather than the bilateral relationship. Recent discussions with one of the more knowledgeable and active members of the Congress, Representative Tom Ridge (R-Penn), indicates that there is no broad base of support within the Congress for improving the bilateral relationship at this time. The overall attitude is seemingly one of disinterest and indifference.<sup>15</sup>

Senator John McCain and Representative Ridge considered legislation in the summer of 1988 calling for the establishment of an interest section with Vietnam as a first step toward an improved official relationship. It was their belief that such an action would facilitate official dialogue between the countries on humanitarian issues. While the Administration was opposed to the idea, believing it unnecessary, the legislation died when Vietnam, in an ill-advised move that reflected their misreading of the Congress, suspended cooperation on POW/MIA and other humanitarian issues in reaction to some Congressional testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Gaston Sigur. Undoubtedly hoping to exploit a perceived schism within the government, such as they did with great success during the war, the Vietnamese action backfired and had the opposite effect as the legislation was withdrawn. Congress did not allow Vietnam to play that game again. Although it is not certain how the legislation would have fared, it is unfortunate that we lost the opportunity for important dialogue on the issue.

Nevertheless, the events point out that Congress has in fact "dealt themselves in" and intends to be an important player in how and when the relationship evolves.

The Administration must lay out a coherent, rational course of action that convinces the families, public as well as the Congress that an improvement in relations is in our best interest. To address that point, we have outlined a number of specific recommendations in the latter part of the paper under the heading **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?** However, POW/MIA is not the only hurdle the Vietnamese must overcome. The 1978 Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia put normalization talks on the back burner for over a decade. While the POW/MIA issue is essentially a bilateral matter between the United States and Vietnam, the Cambodian problem is more complex since it is being played out in the international arena with a multitude of actors.

#### **CAMBODIA AND A SATISFACTORY POLITICAL SOLUTION**

Although not at all a major concern for most Americans, Cambodia is viewed by the Administration and the State Department as at least equal to the POW/MIA problem, and, in reality, probably even more important.

While not wanting to review the entire problem of Cambodia for the last 15 years since there have been very thorough studies completed and books written concerning all aspects of the subject, a few facts deserve mentioning. First, the United States, in what can now only be viewed as a very unfortunate set of circumstances, finds itself supporting the Khmer Rouge in opposition to the Hun Sen government in Cambodia; in effect finding the Khmer Rouge more palatable than the Vietnamese installed government. This appears to be a case of being more anti-Vietnamese than pro-Cambodian, since nearly every country of the world publicly disavowed itself from the Khmer Rouge genocide of its own people. Now, 12 years after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, as the world struggles to find an end to the problem and bring peace again to Cambodia, the U.S. finds itself saying in one breath that the Khmer Rouge must not

be allowed to come once again to power, but in another stating that it supports the CGDK coalition of Sihanouk, even though it knows the Khmer Rouge is one of the coalition partners. Unfortunately, the Khmer Rouge is also the best armed, trained, and organized of the coalition partners. The question of how to allow proper representation of all parties involved in the Cambodian problem yet prevent the Khmer Rouge from seizing power appears to be the secret to the final outcome.

We believe a productive course of action seems fairly plausible:

First, based on comments from Ambassador Lang, there now appears to be Vietnamese and Cambodian support for a modified version of the Australian solution. Rather than continue to wait for total agreement on all aspects of the Australian solution, which simply allows the Khmer Rouge to gain momentum, or perhaps continue to wait for the "perfect solution," we should pursue this breakthrough now.

The Australian solution, also referred to as the Evans plan after its originator, Australian Foreign Minister Evans, emphasizes the following points in its efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement:

- A U.N. peacekeeping force that would be responsible for implementing a ceasefire in cantonments, disarming the forces, destroying military stockpiles and monitoring the ceasefire;
- Internationally supervised elections to select a constituent assembly;
- An internationally supervised end to external sanctuaries and external assistance for military purposes to all parties;
- A massive international program of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction for Cambodia;
- Permitting civilians in all camps associated with the resistance factions to have freedom of movement to return to their place of origin or to accompany their faction back into Cambodia.<sup>16</sup>



We could publicly express our support for the plan and note that both the Hun Sen and Vietnamese governments support the plan and will work together with the US to achieve its goal.

At the same time we are moving to establish the framework for implementing the Australian plan, we must increase our diplomatic pressure on China to stop providing military aid to the Khmer Rouge and put heavy pressure on Thailand to stop allowing its territory to be used as a transshipment route for Khmer Rouge weapons and urge them to stop providing sanctuary for the Khmer Rouge escaping Cambodia.

Secondly, and this is a new idea, we should offer the Vietnamese the face-saving solution for an immediate coalition government by supporting the concept of a CGDK and Hun Sen coalition until, in support of the Australian plan, elections can be held under the auspices of the United Nations. We propose to insure inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the political solution by allowing them to campaign like all parties in accordance with Cambodian election laws. They will, however, be required to campaign as one of the CGDK partners in the coalition. This is a change from the Evans solution, which would have the U.N. Secretary General appoint a special representative to serve as head of an interim government, governing the current bureaucracy through use of international civil servants he brings with him. What it would do is allow (or more properly, force) the PRK and CGDK to coexist and show to their fellow Cambodians (and the rest of the world) their abilities to jointly govern. The details would have to be worked out, but there is hope when both Vietnam and the Hun Sen government agree to try. The Vietnamese must support the remainder of the Australian solution and require cooperation from Hun Sen to complete the process. Vietnam must insure its troops are out of Cambodia so there can be no third party which can derail the efforts towards normalization by pointing out that the Vietnamese have lied to the world. Once the elections are held, Vietnam, the Hun Sen government, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, must recognize the legitimate government, regardless of its type or composition, and let it

begin rebuilding the nation. This action by Vietnam should meet the US requirement for participation towards a peaceful solution in Cambodia.

If Hanoi truly desires integration into the "normal" pattern of Southeast Asian politics and economic growth, this is not too high a price to pay.

In practical terms, the Evans plan, with modification, makes a winner (or more precisely, a non-loser), of everyone concerned because it gives something to everyone and requires capitulation from no one:

- For the Cambodian resistance, it ends the fighting, provides a peacekeeping force, and gives them an opportunity to shape Cambodia's future through the electoral process;
- For ASEAN and China it allows verification of Vietnamese withdrawal and denies Hanoi international acceptance of the Hun Sen regime by any means other than the ballot box;
- For the Hun Sen regime it would secure an end to the fighting, cessation of Chinese support for Pol Pot, exclusion of the Khmer Rouge as a separate party from the interim administration, an opportunity to do well in the free elections, increased foreign assistance, enhanced international legitimacy, and perhaps a share of the Cambodian seat at the United Nations;
- For Vietnam it gives Hanoi's leaders an opportunity to end its international isolation and offers Hun Sen the possibility of a significant role in the new government. It also reduces the chances that Vietnamese troops would have to be sent back to Cambodia to prevent another Khmer Rouge victory.
- For the Soviet Union, it allows disengagement from another regional conflict, further reduces East-West tension and emphasizes the evolving Soviet policy of using the U.N. as a mechanism for resolving regional disputes.
- For the Cambodian people it allows self determination and a degree of certainty that the Khmer Rouge will not return to power.<sup>17</sup>

Once Vietnam has fulfilled its obligation in Cambodia, the United States should immediately respond by dropping a portion of the economic embargo and agreeing to World Bank or IMF assistance to Vietnam on a priority basis. America should then make an announcement stating Vietnam has met the conditions established by the United States and that the US is appointing a team to begin immediate talks leading to normalization of relations.

The Vietnamese need to be honest in their dealings with us as normalization develops, ever mindful of the fact that there will remain a sizable portion of the American population that will see normalization as a sell-out by the Administration, and will be looking for every opportunity to discredit Vietnam and the President for his action.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICA**

Although resolution of the POW/MIA issues and a participation in a negotiated settlement in Cambodia meet the requirements for normalization established by the United States, America has additional reasons for seeking normalized relations with Vietnam and maintaining a presence in South East Asia which also need to be discussed.

The United States is commonly referred to as a "status quo" country in terms of our political and strategic goals of desiring to have regional stability throughout the world. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that many of our allies are often surprised when our actions run counter to our stated goals. Our approach to Vietnam is such an example.

One may argue that the United States should have recognized the government of Vietnam in 1977-78, when their original overtures for normalization were made. The Vietnamese government came to power in a popularly supported revolution, was firmly in control of the entire country, and had in fact established stability in the area after nearly 20 years of uninterrupted warfare.

The fact of the matter is that this was not entirely the case. As Vietnam attempted to use the POW/MIA issue as a form of blackmail for normalization, we chose to disengage ourselves from the problem and continue economic isolation of the country. Recognition and normalization possibilities have only become plausible as Vietnam has begun increased cooperation on the POW/MIA problem.

The logic of our argument may be missed by many who do not place such high value on human life and prefer to see the POW/MIA issue relegated to a humanitarian issue only. There can be no support, however, either by Congress or the American public in general, for recognition and normalization without a livable solution to the POW/MIA problem.

Although we must remain sensitive to the concerns of our ASEAN allies towards Indochina, it's far more important, in view of the complex and rapidly changing world political situation, to examine our own requirements in the area. We need to apply a critical litmus test to the issues in view of increasing requirements for our attention and our limited monetary assets to support all the problem areas or areas of interest.

The fact is that Vietnam has been and continues to be a major player in South East Asia due to its population, large and experienced military, and strategic geographical location. For our purposes, like it or not, it is the only regional power that has the military capability to defeat the Khmer Rouge and insure it does not seize power in Cambodia.

That Vietnam is the only regional power with military capability to deny the Khmer Rouge victory is extremely important. As the various interested world powers move towards establishing a framework for peace in Cambodia, we cannot forget that the Khmer Rouge have the ability, if they see themselves denied a share of political power, either real or imagined, to plunge the country into civil war, knowing they have the best hope of success in once more ruling Cambodia. While the proper solution to the problem should be shared power, it's important to always have a back-up plan. It is in the Chinese

interests, as a slap at the Vietnamese, to sponsor the Khmer Rouge as they have done. Once again, the age-old animosity between Chinese and Vietnamese may be the balance of power in Cambodia and we need to be on the winning side. No matter how it is analyzed, siding with the Khmer Rouge against Hun Sen in another civil war is a losing idea of the worst kind.

If the Khmer Rouge seizes power again, the journalist Fred Brown says, Cambodia will become, "an Asian Lebanon doomed to perpetual self-mutilation."<sup>18</sup> The 6.8 million citizens of Cambodia deserve a better future than that.

We should also not forget that the Vietnamese have had a long-standing relationship with the Soviet Union, which also happens to hold most of the markers for Vietnam's substantial foreign debt. While there are some indications that President Gorbachev, as he has done with nearly all the Soviet client states, has pressed the Vietnamese to settle its regional differences with its neighbors and begin putting its economic house in order as the Soviet Union begins to tighten up support to its nearly bankrupt third world friends, little else has changed in the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship.

Soviet military power in the Pacific has seen little change during the restructuring in Europe. The Soviets have been using Vietnamese military bases and even though there is indication that the Soviets are decreasing if not eliminating their presence at the bases, the fact that they could again have access in times of contingency is important.

Normalization of relations between the US and Vietnam will allow a lessening of the foreign debt to the Soviets because the Vietnamese will have alternative market choices. Also, the ever pragmatic Vietnamese, seeing the collapse of Communist policies throughout the world, have already undertaken market changes beginning in 1987 which the US could help exploit. The Vietnamese were not always Communist and do not have to remain that way. The presiding gerontocracy that currently rules Vietnam

cannot live forever. The next generations must have exposure to alternatives, and the US can provide the best example.

Our ASEAN allies have two concerns involving the United States in addition to finding a peaceful solution to the Cambodian problem and establishing regional security. There is much concern that should base right agreements not succeed in the Philippines that the United States might pull out of the area and let China become the policeman of Asia, a concept not at all pleasing to most non-Chinese.

Containing Chinese hegemonic objectives in the region can best be accomplished by integrating Vietnam into the normal pattern of Southeast Asian politics and economy, thereby removing China's leverage over a single state. An isolated Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia leaves ASEAN countries weak and divided against China. A Vietnam integrated into Southeast Asia would contribute to deterring the perceived long-range and predatory Chinese objectives. The United States is the only country that can make this happen. The second concern is that the US will let Japan establish market dominance in Asia, an effort already well on its way to fruition, and eventually military presence and domination of Asia. This in turn will lead to an increase in US-Japanese political and economic disputes. The concern is that 50 years ago the US went to war with Japan to stop the possibility of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, yet the Japanese are on the verge of success now and have accomplished the goal in the market place instead of on the battlefield.

None of our allies in Asia want to be hostages of either Chinese or Japanese hegemony. If we desire to maintain ourselves as a Pacific power, we should not want to see China or Japan have an unfair advantage in the region. Fairness, according to our standards, encompasses a great variety of issues and among them is free access to markets, a fact that we should remain cognizant of as the leading nation of capitalists in the world. The variety of opportunities and the large population base of Southeast Asian countries is something that US business can well appreciate.

Helping put an end to the massive waves of economic emigrants that have plagued their Asian neighbors is also a concern of our allies and a problem that eased economic embargoes through normalized relations can begin to solve. Our ASEAN friends, especially Thailand, have aggressively pursued business opportunities to the point that there is some serious consideration in Cambodia of converting to a banking and monetary system based on the Thai Baht. US businessmen in the meantime are blocked by the American government from conducting trade in Indochina. In need of near total rebuilding of their infrastructures plus massive amounts of western products for every level of their economy, Americans are being penalized while a potentially valuable market is being surrendered to Japan and a collection of newly industrializing nations in ASEAN.

So, while America has been extraordinarily successful in bludgeoning Vietnam's economy into a lifeless mess, it is also being unbelievably short-sighted in punishing its own people and its own economy at the time when we can use all the markets that we can get. Potential billions of dollars are at stake here and the U.S. needs to be a player.

Another issue worth mentioning is the fact that the Vietnamese still maintain the world's fifth largest standing military forces, a fact that makes the other Asian nations nervous. Part of the reason for the size of the force is the instability of relations between the Vietnamese and China and the potential for continued problems in Cambodia. Another very important factor in maintaining the military at such high levels is that although Vietnam apparently demobilized 500,000 troops in 1989, the economic situation in Vietnam is so bad that there is simply no employment for any additional demobilized troops. The elimination of economic embargoes by the US through normalized relations should improve the 10% plus unemployment rate and help create new jobs. A smaller Vietnamese military force for defense purposes only should come as a relief for the Vietnamese who have to maintain the force and need the money for other

parts of their economy, and for Vietnam's neighbors who have a constant case of the jitters when faced by such a massive military machine.

Last, and probably very important for many Americans, is the fact that normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam can be viewed as a great moral victory for America. Vietnam paid the price of victory. By our hands Vietnam has been brought to its knees economically, and there can be no peace with a battered economy. But it will be in our hands again to show them the error of their ways and raise them up to take their place among the other nations of the world. Victory comes in many flavors.

#### **THE VIEW FROM HANOI**

During the course of our research for this paper, it became quite apparent that one very important gap was no reference material from the Vietnamese themselves concerning the main issues impeding normalization. As a result, on 26 March, we spent several hours with the Vietnamese Ambassador to the United Nations, Trinh Xuan Lang, eliciting his views on POW/MIA and other humanitarian issues, the situation in Cambodia, and specific questions concerning the path to normalization of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam. The discussions were very candid, with no hesitation whatsoever by the Ambassador to address all questions posed to him, even though some questions were very pointed and lacking the finesse of diplomatic courtesy.

The Vietnamese feel their struggle from World War II to 1975 was for freedom and independence. Ho Chi Minh had desired normal relations with the United States and had appealed officially for recognition from President Truman on three separate occasions, but, as history shows, the US gave no response. The Vietnamese War ended 15 years ago. The dispute with the United States ended in 1973 with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, but still, the US has not responded.



When France left Vietnam in 1954, at the conclusion of the First Indochina War, she left behind a *Delegation General* to help in solving many of the same types of humanitarian issues that the United States is concerned about today. As a result, relations between France and Vietnam have remained good and are getting better. Vietnam would like to have the same relationship with the United States.

Vietnam believes both it and the United States have some of the same common interests in South East Asia, the most important one being regional security. With a population of 65 million people and a good geographic and strategic location, Vietnam believes it has a responsibility to play an important role in the area. Vietnam understands completely the US desire for regional stability and especially security for Thailand. The fact is that the current situation in the area is far from secure with concerns about the Vietnamese/Chinese situation and, of course, the unsettling problems in Cambodia. After 15 years of conflict following its victory in the Second Indochina War, Vietnam is now dedicated to peace in the area. In order to help contribute to the stability of the area, Vietnam needs to rebuild its economy and get its own internal situation in order. Normalization of relations with the US and freedom from the imposed economic embargo would go a long way to making that situation possible. The second priority for Vietnam after its economy, is to try and solve their differences with China, especially the continued Chinese support for Pol Pot.

While Vietnam fully supports the concept of regional resilience and would like to see a South East Asia free from foreign interference, it believes that the US and Vietnam share common strategic interests and normalized relations can best serve that interest.

The Vietnamese expressed concern that the United States somehow believed that Vietnam possessed some type of control over the Hun Sen government which would allow the Vietnamese to manipulate that country any way it wanted. The Ambassador pointed out that the security of all Indochina countries is interrelated. The idea of an Indochina

Federation is a concept whose time has long passed and there has been no Vietnamese public discussion of such a concept since 1951. Although Hanoi may have believed that such an option was somehow possible, the realization today is that all three countries are different and must be treated differently.

Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia, especially the invasion of the country in 1978, was based on a threat to border security and what they felt was racial hatred being directed by the Khmer Rouge against both the ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia and Vietnamese in the Cambodia/Vietnam border area. The invasion also stopped the Khmer Rouge genocide against the Cambodian population but was simply a secondary accomplishment.

Today, Vietnam's objective is to have all Indochinese states friendly with each other, thereby insuring the security of all three nations. The Vietnamese have broadened their concept of what constitutes security, realizing it means more than just a large military and have now included political and economic strength as well.

Of particular concern for the Vietnamese has been what they perceive as mixed signals from the United States concerning the role expected of them in Cambodia. Ambassador Lang commented that for many years, from many different administration spokespersons, US policy had been that normalization of relations could be carried out if Vietnam withdrew its troops from Cambodia. When Vietnam physically did that in 1989, it appeared to them that the US then added more conditions, now requiring Vietnam to participate in seeking an acceptable final political solution to Cambodia.

While the US has claimed it made no conflicting statements, the Vietnamese strongly disagree. The Ambassador pointed out, however, that both Vietnam and the Phnom Penh government were among the first parties to accept the Australian idea and believe it can be the basis for discussions. We were assured that the Hung Sen government and Vietnam would, with some reluctance, accept the initiatives for a cease fire, peace-keeping troops, and elections.

The discussion concerning the Australian problem led naturally to a more in-depth discussion of the role of the Khmer Rouge in any type of coalition government in Cambodia. Of special interest was the idea of preventing a Khmer Rouge resurgence and why the recently held meetings in Jakarta concerning Cambodian discussions had failed.

The Ambassador made some definite points concerning any type of resolution of the problem in Cambodia. We believe some of these proposals are new since our research did not show this solution having previously been offered by the Vietnamese.

1. All major participants trying to solve the problem have to agree to prevent the Khmer Rouge from coming to power independently as Khmer Rouge.

2. The solution for the problem with the Khmer Rouge is relatively simple. The Vietnamese propose that a coalition government could be formed immediately. It should be a combination of the representatives of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK - Hun Sen's faction) and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK- Sihanouk's faction). Since the National Council of Cambodia, the highest representative body in the nation, would be a coalition, and the Khmer Rouge are one of the members of the CGDK, if Sihanouk as the CGDK leader decides to appoint a CGDK representative to the council who also happens to be Khmer Rouge, that is his decision. The representative will, however, take his place as a CGDK representative, not Khmer Rouge. Under no circumstances could the Khmer Rouge representatives be Pol Pot or Ieng Sery, both of whom have been condemned by all the Cambodian people.

3. Once the coalition is formed the two sides would have to learn to live with each other.

4. Concerning elections, current Cambodian election laws give the right of campaigning and voting to all Cambodians. Vietnam desires that once the elections are held that the people of Cambodia then be allowed to live peacefully under the law.

Ambassador Lang was concerned that during the recently held meeting of the five members of the UN Security Council concerning possibility of actions in Cambodia, no

place in the statement issued was the word "Genocide" mentioned because the members did not want to irritate China since the Khmer Rouge were Chinese clients. The Ambassador felt that the US should pressure China and Sihanouk to come to some type of agreement and also press the ASEAN members (specifically Thailand although this was not stated) to stop providing military support by funneling weapons to the Khmer Rouge and to stop providing sanctuary. The Vietnamese feel the US has been directing its efforts to solving the Cambodian issue by maintaining pressure on Vietnam when it should be pressuring its friend China. Finally, the Vietnamese feel that much could be resolved on the Cambodian issue as well as other areas of concern if the United States would simply have face to face discussions with Vietnam, something they failed to do even at the recent Indonesian meeting. Ambassador Lang pointed out that the US had held discussions with every other participant in attendance except Vietnam, and asked why.

Ambassador Lang was asked Vietnam's opinion of continued presence in South East Asia by US forces and whether or not Vietnam agreed with the concept of the United States providing a security blanket for the area, the importance of maintaining open sea lanes, and the basing rights discussions being conducted with the Philippines.

Vietnam does not feel the US provides a security blanket for SE Asia and would rather see a peaceful, neutral, independent, nuclear-free SE Asia. If it has all these circumstances Vietnam would feel secure because security would be provided to all the area nations by each other. While not in favor of maintaining bases in the Philippines, Vietnam concedes that since we are there, they have no real problems as long as the bases and the troops stationed there are not used against the territory of Vietnam.

Responding to additional questions, Ambassador Lang assured us that Cam Ranh and Da Nang are not Soviet bases, but in fact, are Vietnamese facilities that the Soviets were permitted to use. Lang commented that the Soviets are moving out of the

facilities and would probably not have been there at all if it were not for the continued threat from China.

In our view, the Philippines are asking for more money from the United States than we think fair for the renewal of base agreements. Our ASEAN allies, however, have asked us to remain a presence in SE Asia. With the exception of Singapore, however, whose flight zones are already severely restricted, and whose naval facilities are already inadequate to handle their current local shipbuilding and repairing requirements, no other ASEAN country has come forward to offer facilities or services in their respective countries. Left with the possibility of moving US facilities into some sort of combination between Guam and Japan or one of the other ideas currently being considered by the US, Ambassador Lang was asked if normalization with Vietnam became a fact, and considering the US was no longer a threat to Vietnam, whether the Vietnamese might consider, on a contractual basis, offering the use of the port of Cam Ranh Bay and the air facilities at Da Nang Air Base to the United States. It was explained that such an option would give Vietnam hard currency and jobs while allowing the US facilities closer to the area of interest and the use of facilities with which it was already familiar.

Initially the Ambassador reiterated his comment about Vietnam's desire to have a neutral SE Asia, stating that it was simply too early in the not yet initiated "normalization process" to be discussed. He did not rule out the possibility however, suggesting that it, along with many other issues could be discussed in direct talks between the United States and Vietnam.

Pursuing the issue of normalization, we were interested in how Vietnam sees the relationship developing, i.e., do we begin with an interest section, then to a Charge d' Affairs, and finally to a swap of Ambassadors, or what?

The Vietnamese believe the type and size of representation would depend on the situation at the time. With a few minutes to ponder the question, Ambassador Lang followed up the comment stating that although we could initially start with an interest

section, that in itself sort of hinted of a lack of trust, and that in all probability Vietnam felt that the US could bypass that step and go further.

What would Vietnam expect from the US if normalization did occur? Would they anticipate Foreign Aid, technical aid, food? Vietnam simply hoped for cooperation in all areas if relations were normalized. It was pointed out to us that immediately after conclusion of the war Vietnam had attempted to normalize relations with the United States and that remained their goal. While admittedly Vietnam has a close relationship with the Soviet Union, it also has good relations with France and the Scandinavian countries. Vietnam desires to diversify its relationships and simply asks, "Why not the United States?"

What does Vietnam offer American business that would make the country attractive to outside investment if relations were on a normal basis? Vietnam would offer to American businessmen the same status as other foreign business persons. The rules for investment and business transactions between foreign businesses and Vietnam, have been published, are available for public consumption, and the Vietnamese feel comfortable that they offer incentives and protection for foreign investment. The comment was made to us that the French, British, and even the Indians had already signed agreements for joint ventures in the natural gas and petroleum industries, and such companies as BP, Petrofina, AGIP, and others were already represented. The Ambassador commented that Vietnam was aware that the United States was the most technically qualified in this area and wished it could do business with the Americans. He did not comment on the second half of the original question which concerned printed allegations that Vietnam, suffering from a lack of hard currency reserves, has essentially mortgaged off its natural resources to other nations to obtain needed foreign manufactured goods during the 15 years of US economic sanctions.

In terms of monies owed the International Monetary Fund, Ambassador Lang pointed out that Vietnam is in much better shape than some of its neighbors, owing only

about \$100 million. Considering Vietnamese assets frozen by the US, approximately \$200 million, the Vietnamese feel comfortable that normalization could solve this problem rather easily.

The affect of the US embargo on Vietnam was mentioned and an opinion solicited from Ambassador Lang regarding the impact of the action on his country. Lang replied quite frankly, stating, "it is bad." He added that since late 1986 Vietnam had been involved in a policy of Renovation in all fields. Priority had been put on national reconstruction and the embargo seriously hurts Vietnam in its efforts. Two weeks ago Vietnam was involved in discussions with the IMF regarding economic assistance to Vietnam. The majority of the members of the IMF were positive towards the idea with the exception of Japan and the US. The Ambassador pointed out that many European Economic Community countries, friends of the United States, had resumed assistance to Vietnam and he could not help but question why the US was remaining so intractable.

One major concern of both the United States and the ASEAN nations is the fact that Vietnam maintains the fifth largest standing military force in the world, hardly something a nonthreatening nation needed for its own security. How large a force would Vietnam envision needing if relations with the US were to proceed normally?

The armed forces in Vietnam now are defensive in nature only. According to Ambassador Lang, if there was no threat Vietnam could continue with significant demobilization such as the 500,000 that were recently demobilized. Vietnam does not want to continue spending large sums of money on the military, preferring instead to spend it on rebuilding the country's economy and infrastructure. If the problem in Cambodia could be solved and relations between China and Vietnam normalized then the situation would be different in terms of the size of forces required for defense. The Ambassador was adamant when he stated that at such time as things were normal, the size of the military would be minimal. He also added, as we already knew, part of the

problem with normalization is that the economy is so bad that there are currently no jobs for the military to take if they were to be demobilized.

At the conclusion of our visit, we asked Ambassador Lang if he would like to send a message to the recipients of our research since the audience was likely to be quite varied from those he probably dealt with on a regular basis.

The Ambassador stated the message he wished to send was that the war ended 15 years ago. Now is the time for friendship, cooperation, and reconciliation. There would be no difficulty from the Vietnamese side for such a position and they simply wished for reciprocal action from the U.S.

#### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

"Where do I go from here?", asked Alice.

"This my dear, very much depends on where you want to get to," grinned the Cheshire cat.

#### **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**

This paper began with the supposition that the world is rapidly changing and if the United States is going to promote and protect its national interests, it must be prepared to seize the opportunities such an environment presents. In the months ahead, tough choices will need to be made as the Administration seeks the proper policy balance in Southeast Asia. The decisions made will likely shape our relationship with Vietnam for the next generation at least.

In our view, we are reacting to rather than influencing and helping shape events in Southeast Asia. Cambodia is a good example. For 10 years U.S. policy, in concert with our ASEAN allies, was instrumental in bringing pressure to bear on Vietnam to withdraw their troops. Now, just as the victory appears won, we seem incapable of advancing a realistic plan that takes into account the diverse concerns and interests of the effected parties. Instead, we stand on the sideline, or at least well in the background, and permit



others to step forward and take credit for what our hard fought policies won. We need to start advancing our own national and regional interests in Southeast Asia and that should begin by reassessing our policies vis-a-vis Vietnam.

Since the last of the POWs returned during Operation Homecoming we have wrestled with the haunting question--Was anyone left behind? The policy question for normalization, from the POW/MIA perspective, is not should the issue be declared resolved and closed, but rather, is there any specific evidence to support, or reason to believe, that live POWs are being held against their will by Vietnam? If not, and the Vietnamese continue to cooperate on this important national issue, then the President needs to be advised that the POW/MIA issue should no longer be a barrier to improved relations.

Likewise, for over a decade we have chided the Vietnamese to get their troops out of Cambodia and contribute to a suitable political solution to that perplexing problem. They have basically complied with the first part of the requirement. How we have succeeded in our search for common ground around which we can build a framework for peace. To insure U.S. geopolitical strategic interests are served, a new policy is in order.

First, concerning the POW/MIA issue, the American people need to understand that overall the Government has made a good faith effort to account for those missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. The effort has been better in some Administrations than others, but basically every reasonable action has been taken. This nation has no greater obligation than the commitment it owes to those who serve it in combat and to their families. Service members must know that their country and its leaders are committed to making every effort to recover their remains if they are killed; to insure their safe return to their families and loved ones if they are captured; to obtain the fullest possible accounting for those who remain missing and unaccounted for. No government can every repay a family for the loss of a loved one. But it can, indeed it

must, fulfill its obligation to insure that every reasonable effort is made to secure the return of, or an accounting for, those Service members.

After an erratic effort in the first few years after the war's end, one can only conclude that the renewed effort that began almost a decade ago in the early years of the Reagan Administration, has met that obligation. It is time to take stock and assess where we are and, perhaps even more importantly, where we are going on this important issue. Clearly the Vietnamese record is spotty at best. They have manipulated the issue in an effort to extract concessions, thus making it difficult for many Americans to put aside their long-held suspicions and feelings of mistrust. Vietnam needs to recognize this, and understand that such actions only make it that much more difficult for the American people to accept their claims that they are making a good faith effort.

By the same token, America cannot continue to fight the war. We must be ready to recognize that Vietnam has apparently made a decision to try and end its isolation and join the community of nations. Their troop withdrawal from Cambodia, internal economic reforms, and cooperation on POW/MIA and other humanitarian issues all suggest that it is time to reassess our bilateral relationship.<sup>19</sup> We need to recognize that at some point they may indeed have provided us what it is they know. That is why it is so critical to determine exactly where we are and where we want to go. Even more importantly, we need to ascertain how we will know when we get there (or is it possible we have already gotten there?).

While not yet certain, it is possible a Cambodian solution will be achieved in the foreseeable future. One only has to ponder events in Eastern Europe to realize stranger things have happened. If some surprising movement is made, the question of where we stand on POW/MIA will move to the forefront. A road map is needed for both sides to follow that outlines a plan of action that goes beyond the next technical meeting or joint field investigation. Without the proper planning, preparation and strategy, the issue will remain captive to the whims of those who choose to joust at windmills, real or otherwise.

Since the first Vessey mission to Hanoi, there has been a sustained and expanding level of cooperation from Vietnam. It is clear the Vietnamese are trying to satisfy our requirements. Not surprisingly, they are attempting to do so with a minimum of effort and the least possible inconvenience to themselves. Nevertheless, they are giving us access that many believed unthinkable just a short time ago. We have learned important information on that most haunting aspect of the issue--the live prisoner question. The time has come for the Administration to address that issue head on. Sufficient information is available to make a determination regarding the probability of a still unaccounted for American being held against his will in Vietnam. General Vessey's input should be solicited regarding what we know and whether or not the issue should continue to stand in the way of an improved relationship. In addition to being a recognized authority whose integrity is above reproach, he enjoys the advantage of being able to speak candidly because he is unencumbered by any particular constituency. Making a determination on the live prisoner issue is the necessary first step to developing a coherent policy concerning the future relationship with Vietnam.

In addition to the live prisoner question, there are other goals and objectives as well. These can best be realized by defining for the Vietnamese a course of action they need to follow to satisfy our requirements. Currently, the Vietnamese feel like they are trying to hit a moving target. They have voiced this frustration in the past and Ambassador Lang raised it with us as well, remarking that we never want to close out a case and always have additional cases requiring investigation. The source of this frustration is rooted in the fact that our planning at the policy level is often short-sighted, addressing the immediate problem but with little thought given to how each action advances the policy objectives as a whole. We have successfully resolved a number of the original 70 cases General Vessey passed to the Vietnamese because we worked out a specific course of action to follow that would result in measurable progress. It is interesting to note Ambassador Lang's observation that of the original 70

case files passed by General Vessey, the Vietnamese believe 56 can be declared closed. In their view, full and complete investigations have been accomplished and no further investigative activity appears warranted based on what the joint teams discovered.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. side considered only 17 of the cases closed.<sup>21</sup> These are the only cases in which remains have been returned and identified as those of missing Americans from the 70 case list. This "disparity" illustrates the difficulties the two sides encounter when trying to define progress. We need a plan outlining specific objectives that provides the other side a reasonable target at which to aim. If we can remain focused on specific objectives, the Vietnamese may see some tangible benefit in cooperating. Without such a standard, it is impossible to have any meaningful measurement of progress, or know when, or if, we can declare victory.

The current situation presents the policymaker with a two-fold dilemma. Without knowing in any definitive sense where we stand on POW/MIA, movement towards normalization is captive to that issue. Likewise, should a Cambodian settlement be reached and the pressures for normalization increase, it will be difficult to present a compelling argument that more needs to be done on POW/MIA without the hard data necessary to make the case.

Outlined below are specific actions that will facilitate achieving measurable progress on the POW/MIA and Cambodian issues.

First, develop an independent process/procedure for assessing the results of the joint search and recovery team investigations. This will allow some quantification of progress achieved to date. An independent process/procedure is necessary to provide a balanced approach or "reasonableness test" (in other words, what have we learned on each case and could a reasonable person conclude that no further investigation effort is warranted). A mechanism with some degree of independence is necessary since, without some autonomy, the same agencies/individuals responsible for the policy aspects of the issue and the case investigations are in effect judging their own work and effectiveness.

One could argue that thus far they have been unable to do so. It is time to look beyond the return/recovery of identifiable remains as the single criteria for closing out a case.

Second, if crash site excavations are an integral part of the accounting process and going to be actively pursued, then we should present a comprehensive crash site survey and excavation plan to the Vietnamese. This plan should identify candidate sites, outline procedures for the excavation teams to follow and a proposed reimbursement schedule. Several years ago, KCRC identified approximately 300 candidate sites that might warrant survey and excavation. While this work was preliminary, it provides some indication of the magnitude of the task. Thus far, there has been one crash site excavation in Vietnam (excellent cooperation but no remains recovered) and nine in Laos (results mixed). Up to now, these endeavors have been touted as tangible evidence of progress and movement on the issue and have basically been pursued independent of any overall plan of action. That is not to say they are unimportant. Obviously, those cases where remains are recovered, identified and returned to the next of kin for burial, serve to underscore the commitment the Government has to the Service member and family. The point is, if excavations are important and necessary to realizing our objectives, then a plan should be devised, presented to the Vietnamese and a negotiated agreement obtained that will result in measurable progress. It is possible, of course, that the policy should be that we do not want to actively pursue excavations, but rather will conduct them as sites are discovered after normalization, just as we currently do with newly discovered World War II or Korean War sites.

Regarding POW/MIA cooperation on the part of the Vietnamese, they need to give serious consideration to how they can expand and accelerate cooperation for both their unilateral efforts and the joint search and recovery team investigations. For instance, they need to improve the quality and detail of the reports they provide to the U.S. side resulting from their unilateral efforts.

Likewise, they need to make their wartime reporting and archival information available. While they may not have reports on every incident, they surely have more than they have provided to date. If there is nothing to hide, they should make that information available so the U.S. side can draw their own conclusions about the fate of the individuals in question. Failure to make that good faith effort will only exacerbate the mistrust and suspicions carried over from events long ago.

To complement the wartime reporting and archival information, the Vietnamese need to permit U.S. officials access to military museums and other areas that collect or display information regarding the shootdown and capture of Americans. Our investigative teams have solid information on where pertinent information can be found. No purpose is served by continuing to deny that information.

The two sides need to come to an agreement on a procedure to investigate live sighting reports in a timely and credible manner. Undoubtedly, reports will continue to come in for many years. They will need timely investigation. It is important that a credible procedure be developed that permits prompt follow-up action. It is in both our interests to address this aspect of the issue seriously.

For the most part U.S. policy has been in the reactive mode. We have done little to encourage the Vietnamese to cooperate other than threaten them with the "big stick" (no normalization). Perhaps now is the time to try a different approach and test their seriousness. Currently, the U.S. is reluctant to take that first step. That strikes us as short-sighted. This Administration's attitude is especially puzzling when you compare it to how we treat Laos, whose cooperation on POW/MIA pales in comparison to Vietnam's, yet we are constantly searching for ways to assist them.<sup>22</sup>

There are other signals that could be sent to the Vietnamese that might induce them to greater cooperation as well. For instance, we could respond in a positive way to a humanitarian disaster. For maximum effect, we suggest the offer be made directly, on a clearly humanitarian basis, rather than through an international organization. An

occasional relaxing of the 25-mile limit for the UN Mission in New York or discussions on the unfreezing of their assets are only two of the measures we could take to show the Vietnamese we are willing to meet them half way.

Thus far, if one were to add up the score cards following the first Vessey mission to Hanoi and compare what the Vietnamese said they would do (resume cooperation on POW/MIA and the other humanitarian issues) with what we said we would do (address certain Vietnamese humanitarian concerns), the tally would be in their favor. They have moved far enough along over a fairly sustained period of time that it seems we can now in good conscience expend some political capital and take some "risks." A more active policy may bring some surprising results. We just need to be careful, for we just might get what we seek.

Vietnam's desire to break out from their isolation makes them amenable to solve the POW/MIA issue and become more flexible in their efforts to achieve a workable peace in Cambodia. We have outlined a course of action that clearly delineates the proper path to follow from an American perspective. What is needed now is good will on the part of all parties concerned to follow the plan and work our way on the long path to normalization.

#### **THE POST-CAMBODIAN PLAN FOR NORMALIZATION ACTIONS**

The question by Americans of "What's in it for us?" concerning the normalization of relations with Vietnam needs to be answered by the Vietnamese with positive steps.

In Vietnam itself, the best thing the government can do is to continue with the economic reforms begun in 1987, especially those areas dealing with a free market economy. Also, they need to show the rest of the world that there really are changes happening by expanding personal freedoms for its citizens, with more access to Western ideas. America will respond if it sees an effort to change.

Additionally, Vietnam should immediately undertake to cooperate in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the Multi-fiber Arrangement, as a means of further eliminating US differences with Vietnam. These are positive steps which will have positive American response.

For the United States, there are numerous options which can easily be chosen by the President, with or without Congressional approval, which will send a signal to Vietnam that America keeps its word. Among these are:

a. Initiating official cultural, scientific, and educational exchange programs using the US-China model as an example, with the US Information Agency in charge of managing the programs. There is no better way for two alien cultures to better understand each other than on a people to people basis.

b. Lifting the travel advisory for US citizens travelling to Vietnam, for we will have some type of official representation in country.

In a more complicated area, economics, there are some problems to be resolved. Since Vietnam is one of these few countries upon which the US has imposed the most comprehensive and restrictive types of sanctions, not all can be lifted immediately or easily. Actions should be taken for those most immediate and/or easiest sanctions to be lifted.

The toughest measure is the one that requires a total and strictly enforced embargo on all U.S. trade and financial transactions with Vietnam. This embargo on all transactions, including the blocking of Vietnamese assets in the US, can be removed by executive action in several ways and should be done soon after normalization.

Most Favored Nation status, which would allow significantly lower tariff rates for Vietnamese goods coming into the United States, can be granted to Vietnam even though it is a communist country. Vietnam needs only to establish and maintain in force, an acceptable emigration policy to comply with the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik



amendment and related legislation of the Trade Act of 1974. This Vietnam could do in the direct talks with the US on normalization.

Export financing to Vietnam through export credits is restricted or affected by the overall embargo. Principal programs affected are export credits and credit guarantees or insurance of the Export-Import Bank of the United States and export credits of the Commodity Credit Corporation. The restrictions can be lifted simply by having the President determine such transactions are in the national interest.

Both sides need to settle Foreign Claims against each other. The Foreign Claims Settlement Commission has currently validated claims of \$100 million against Vietnam. These claims could be easily satisfied by Vietnam if the US will release the nearly \$200 million of Vietnamese assets currently frozen in the U.S.

The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Trade and Development Program (TDP), and P.L. 480 food assistance programs could be established with Vietnam at will.

Foreign Assistance to Vietnam is not a politically feasible idea and the concept is probably years away, if ever. Vietnam should not realistically expect foreign aid when all of Eastern Europe is here now and needy.

## **SUMMARY**

The outline of the process toward normalization and the immediate post-normalization actions we recommend, should now be clear. Only the will of both sides remains to be tested to determine whether both parties can and will truly attempt to work out their differences.

One thing remains certain. The U.S. should not continue with its current policy, fashioned in the China mold, of failing to recognize a country because we do not happen to like its type of government.

Additionally, we should keep in mind that almost immediately after World War II we began rebuilding the infrastructure of both Japan and Germany, creating for them the most modern industrial bases in the world. Within five years from war's end we had begun rearming Germany. Their successes today as strong American allies, models of democracy, and winners in the world market place are held up for world emulation. The fact that we defeated Japan and Germany and did not defeat Vietnam should not be a road block. Surely the feelings against Japan and Germany after the war were no less strong than those against Vietnam, and neither Germany nor Japan had any strong history of democracy prior to US military involvement. People can and do change and with America's help, so can Vietnam.

If America continues to see itself as having lost the war in Vietnam and sees isolation of Vietnam as retribution, we need to be aware that Vietnam lost the peace, has served 15 years of solitary confinement, paid its debt to society, and should now be paroled to earn its way in the world.

## **ENDNOTES**

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10. Mr. Nayan Chanda, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in interview with the authors, January 21, 1990.
11. Lang, March 26, 1990.
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14. Mrs. Mary Stout, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, in interview with the authors, March 6, 1990.
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**19. "Hong Kong, Hanoi, Washington," THE WASHINGTON POST, January 31, 1990,  
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**20. Lang, March 26, 1990.**

**21. Information provided by Defense Intelligence Agency Special Office for  
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**22. Keith B. Richburg, "Communist Laos Pursues Key Economic Reforms," THE  
WASHINGTON POST, March 24, 1990, Sec. A, p. 24.**

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEWS**

An integral part of the research for this paper consisted of personal interviews with key agencies and personnel knowledgeable on the POW/MIA issue, the Cambodian situation and U.S.-Vietnamese relations. We attempted to reach a broad cross-section of people both inside and outside the Government. The currently serving Government officials asked for nonattribution of their remarks so they could speak as candidly as possible. We agreed to honor those requests. We are grateful to the following individuals who gave so generously of their time:

Mr. Nayan Chanda, currently a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A noted journalist who has written many insightful pieces on Southeast Asia.

Ambassador Trinh Xuan Lang, Socialist Republic of Vietnam's Ambassador to the United Nations.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Mather, USAF (ret). Former Commander, Joint Casualty Resolution Center Liaison Office, Bangkok, Thailand.

Congressman Tom Ridge, Republican-Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Mary Stout, President, Vietnam Veterans of America.

Interviews were conducted with U.S. Government officials from the Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency and the Department of State.

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